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A Dissertation on Dysentery

By

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of North Carolina.

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Dysentery-

The term Dysentery, designates a disease attended with the following Symptoms. It usually commences, with a chill, succeeded by heat on the surface, of the body, and accompanied, with considerable disorder of the Stomach, and Bowels, as nausea, vomiting, and flatulence. The patient soon feels very painful, and severe griping, and voids frequently by stool, a slimy mucus, commonly streaked with blood. This appearance of the alvine evacuation, is supposed to afford, a tolerably certain indication, relative to the seat, of the disease. When there are, only streaks of blood, in the mucus, the lower part, of the intestinal canal is most affected: but when the blood is com-
-mingled, with the faeces, it is considered an evidence, that the disease is seated higher, in the canal. — The discharge goes on

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for some time, previous to the appearance of natural faeces. When these do appear they are under the form of small, compact, hard, substances denominated Scybala, which being evacuated the patient experiences some respite from pain.

Together with the appearances already mentioned, there are often discoverable in the evacuations, substances resembling pieces of cheese. The stools have a peculiarly fœtid odour, which towards the close of the disease becomes intolerably offensive.

These symptoms are generally followed by a distressing Tenesmus, or a frequent desire to go to stool with an inability to discharge any thing. This was once supposed to be caused exclusively by ulceration, in the rectum: but it is certain that irritation of any kind in the rectum will produce it, and moreover the ulceration is accidentae, and not at all essentiae to the disease

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- Strangury, is sometimes, a symptom of Dysentery it is caused probably, by the neck of the Bladder participating in the inflammation, affecting the intestines.

These are the usual symptoms, attendant, on Dysentery; but if its progress is not interrupted these symptoms become more aggravated, and it assumes others of a more dangerous aspect, as cold extremities, tension of the Abdomen Petechiae, great prostration of strength, with a small, and feeble pulse – The discharge from the rectum is at this stage, much altered in appearance, resembling now the washings of flesh – these symptoms may be considered precursors, of approaching dissolution, and demand the most prompt, and persevering attention, of the Physician, to check their progress.

There is sometimes, little or no discharge in this disease. This is ascribed to the inflammation being so great as to transcend the point, of

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secretory action. This accords with the opinion, of Mr. Ramsden, as regards the manner in which a radical cure, is effected in Hydrocele, without an obliteration of the Sac. We also sometimes see it the case in Gonorrhea.

When the disease, is to terminate fatally, there is often, previous to death, a total exemption from pain, & suffering.

The Dysentery, usualy occurs, at the same seasons of the year, and in those situations, in which Intermittent, and Remittent fevers are most prevalent. From this circumstance, and from its occasionelly assuming, the epidemic character we may with great propriety, attribute its principal cause, to Marsh Miasmata. In the low marshy situations of the South, I have often seen symp-toms, characteristick of the existence, of Dysentery and Bilious fever, present at the same time.

But in enumerating the causes of Dysentery, we should not entirely overlook the sensible

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to the disease, [illegible] diminished [illegible] the cause
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ventilation [illegible] but in no other
respect to me believe it ever to be so. [illegible]
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[illegible] of disease.

Dr. asserts the seat of the disease to appear
to dissection inconceivable, from that it was
attributable to [illegible] in the large intestines [illegible]
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in the acute and [illegible] of the [illegible], or
previous inflammation. [illegible] let us trace
the progress of the disease from [illegible]
and we will [illegible] [illegible] plausible,
to attribute the effect, to a [illegible]
digestive apparatus. The mucous coat, [illegible]
[illegible] of the stomach, [illegible]

mere ulceration of the bowels, corroborates the opinion, that the Stomach is the primary seat, of Dysentery, but, that the disease descends, proceeding from the Stomach, through the intestinal canal.

The Hepatic system, participates extensively, in the ravages of this disease. The wasted, & deranged appearance of the Liver far beyond what could be expected from general, constitutional exhaustion gives countenance, to this opinion. On this account, it has been alledged, that the liver, is the primary seat, of Dysentery. But with more plausibility, we might attribute the effects of the disease, to a derangement, of any other of the abdominal viscera, as the Spleen, Pancreas, and even the Kidneys, are sometimes found in a very disordered condition.

— *Treatment* — [illegible] [illegible] given the above in addition, of the [illegible] and causes of Dysentery, the [illegible] of treatment, become [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] treatment with considerable bleeding [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] in the [illegible] and [illegible] considerable effect, on its subsequent progress.—

The gastric uneasiness, in which the [illegible] usually ushered in, seems to justify the exhibition of emetics, in its early stages. This practice, was I believe first taught by the great Sydenham, whose example, has since been pretty generally followed.

In most of the cases of dysentery, which have come under my observation, in which bilious diseases, emetics have been found eminently serviceable. They relieve the stomach of the load of offensive matter so distressing, and are likewise instrumental in producing that determination, to the surface which is so great a desideratum, in the management of dysentery. The intention is not however to recommend emetics in every case of dysentery, on the contrary I am convinced

[illegible] cases, [illegible] are [illegible] and [illegible] at least [illegible]. In the southern district of our country, the [illegible] value of the disease is strongly contrasted, and a course [illegible] experience demanded.—

In the management of this disease it is of the utmost consequence, that the secretary, noted as a condition of the stomach be carefully kept in view, and that the rapid irritating discharge which commences it, has a tendency to isolate and aggravate the inflammation. We cannot therefore expect to give relief until it ceases to be excitated. For this purpose cathartics are necessarily called into requisition. It seems now to be an established rule, that the purging should be [illegible] and [illegible], the discharge becomes [illegible], or [illegible] so. Nothing, not even opium itself relieves the griping so effectually as a production of purging — [illegible]

[illegible] have facilitated the operation of [illegible] [illegible].

When the irritating matter, & the alimentary canal, have been in this manner evacuated, the [illegible] will now be met with considerably more [illegible], than in the onset of the disease. The [illegible] is now to be continued with the [illegible] and Opium [illegible], & some mild laxatives, until the discharges become natural.

When we have progressed thus far in the treatment of the disease, astringents may be safely resorted to. They are highly instrumental in [illegible] and putting a final stop to the [illegible] of the disease. [illegible] of administering them [illegible] found prior to [illegible] or before the [illegible] evacuations have been made, [illegible], they have rather a [illegible] tendency.

The [illegible] which I have found most [illegible] is a combination of [illegible] and Opium in the following proportions —

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to, with considerable advantage. The best mode of administering it, is in the form of a suppository.. A decoction of rice, with Laudanum, is an excellent injection in Tenesmus. Nothing however affords so much relief in these cases, as an injection of about 1/2 pint of fresh melted Butter. It is far more grateful, and less irritating, than any other injection used for the purpose. It may be repeated every third or fourth hour, or as often as occasion may require.—

It is with extreme diffidence, that I submit this imperfect sketch of the nature, and treatment, of Dysentery, to the examination of the Gentlemen, of the Medical Faculty. I am sure however, they will make every necessary allowance for its defects, when they are informed that it is the production of a mind, not matured by ages or tutored by experience; and that no exertion has been spared, to meet their approbation —